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UK Report

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The UK's national Electronic Theses Online Service, EThOS, was launched in January 2009 (<http://ethos.bl.uk>). The JISC funded project, EThOSnet, which supported the development of the service concluded at the end of May. The Toolkit, which was produced to assist UK Higher Education Institution participation in EThOS, contains information about membership and advice about ETD advocacy and the establishment of ETD/institutional repositories. Cranfield University has agreed to maintain the Toolkit now that the EThOSnet project has ended—so essential updates will be incorporated in the future.

The British Library is providing EThOS now instead of its microfilm service as its means of document supply/access to doctoral level theses. EThOS provides a single point of access to UK theses for researchers worldwide. Access is free at point of use. In addition to harvesting ETDs from the institutional repositories of EThOS members, the British Library is digitizing paper theses on demand. In the first three months (20 January – 20 April) the BL received requests for over 12,000 theses to be digitized; approximately 150-160 such requests are received daily.

Since the launch of the service, the EThOS Website has received over 500,000 hits per month, making it the most popular online resource available from the British Library. The BL has purchased additional scanning equipment and introduced an additional staffing shift in an effort to reduce the backlog of requests. The number of requests for theses in the first three months since EThOS went live has surpassed the annual rate of requests received in recent years when the microfilm service was in operation.